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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/NCE TARA ERATH AND MICHAEL SESSUMS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ TAKES STEPS TO BUILD ITS CIVIC RELATIONSHIP WITH POLAND

REF: 2004 WARSAW 5583

1. (SBU) During a meeting on other issues, the Iraqi Ambassador to Poland, Hussein Shialtagh, commented that the Iraqi Embassy in Poland is trying to build closer military, commercial, and civic relations with Poland. He said that while the military relationship is already quite robust due to Poland's presence in Iraq and the success of some Polish defense companies, a strong civic relationship between the two states has not yet developed. Shialtagh said that he believes increased civic and commercial ties between Iraq and Poland would help the Polish government justify greater military and security ties with Iraq. To this end, the Iraqi Embassy is trying to develop several programs with Poland.

2. (SBU) Foremost among these is a proposal to establish a scholarship program for Iraqis to study in Poland. Shialtagh said that he and the rector of Warsaw University, Piotr Weglenski, recently discussed creating 400 scholarships for Iraqi students. Shialtagh hopes to establish the program this spring for possible enrollment by Iraqis this fall. He privately lamented, however, the lack of Polish funds for such a program and doubts that the Iraqi government can fund such a program.

3. (SBU) Shialtagh said he is trying to bring Iraqi NGOs to Poland in order to observe the expected upcoming Polish elections in June. Shialtagh believes that doing so would not only help the Iraqis better understand how a free and fair election is held, but it would also have a positive effect on Polish attitudes toward Iraq by showing Poles that they serve as an example for Iraq. Such a program could also create opportunities for further cooperation between Polish and Iraqi NGOs. Shialtagh suggested that USAID might fund such a program.

4. (SBU) Shialtagh also commented that he would like to see the proposed international conference on the needs of the Iraqi disabled take place in Poland (reftel A). The Iraqi public would warmly receive such a conference, and it would further illustrate to Iraqis the positive role that Poland has played in Iraq's reconstruction. He has not yet heard any formal word from Poland concerning whether the GOP will host the conference.

5. (SBU) Comment. Although Shialtagh's proposals could be effective in creating immediate positive public relations benefits for the Polish-Iraqi bilateral relationship, both the Iraqi embassy and the GOP seem short on funds, which will hinder the realization of his ideas. End comment.  
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